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CHARITY

AND

1203

Integrity of Life

THE

Pure ESSENTIALS

OF

Christian Religion:

OR

MEDITATIONS

On *James* 1. 27.

Thomas Gregory Wing 1931

By T. G. M. A.

*But to do Good, and Communicate, forget not; for with such Sacrifices
God is well pleased, Heb 13. 16.*

LONDON, Printed by J. Bradford, for the Author, 1696.



ГЛАВА НАД

СИЛЫ АНАСТАСИИ

To the Most Reverend Father in God, *THOMAS*, by Divine Providence, Archbishop of *CANTERBURY*.

Religion being of that great Excellency as to teach us the Love of God, and our Neighbour, how to Reverence him, and born to be tender-hearted to our Brethren, so as we may best enjoy our selves, and benefit others, I hope you will be pleased not to refuse this ensuing Discourse a just title to your Patronage. 'Tis true, they who go back from these Duties of Exemplary Piety and Charity, neither regard what Rules they have prescribed, nor what Practice they have directed, nor do they regard any thing that carries the face of Love and true Munificence, and are only valiant in breaking those Laws, which Heaven hath made Eternal, such a sort of Men have commonly great judgments denounced against them. They are depriu'd of the Divine Protection here while they live, and after their Death no Man lamenteth. But on the contrary, many Blessings and Rewards are Entail'd upon Pious and Liberal, the Favour of God in par-

doning our Sins, a promised Security from Incum-
bent Evils, a bountiful Support under Afflictions,
and at length a certain Reception into Eternal Glo-
ry. Cornelius was heard for his Devout Life and
Alms-giving. But that I may not be too prolix,
if you discern any Imperfections in the Copy, let not
these Celestial Graces, for my sake, fall under any
Imputation, that need no such Advocate as I am,
or such a common Pen, but one from an Angel's
Wing to advance their Esteem.

There's a Beauty in Holiness beyond that of State,
and a Glory in Humility above the proud Inscript-
tion of Monarchs; both these wait upon Charity and
Integrity of Life, and are the only Ornaments of our
Christian Profession. But here that Disrespect you
have to the Disregarders of these Duties, puts a stop to
my Pen, forbidding me to be too curious in the de-
scription of these Graces, which are so eminently vi-
sible in your Life and Conversation. So that hoping
your Candour and Good Temper will give a favourable
Reception, to what I have Offered, I humbly take
my leave to Subscribe my self

Your GRACE's

Most Obedient and Faithful Servant,

T. GREGORY.

JAMES i. 27.

Pure and Undefiled Religion before God and the Father, is this, to visit the Fatherless and the Widow in their Afflictions, and to keep himself Unspotted from the World.

Whoever he be that looks into his Bible, with a sincere design, of receiving any benefit unto himself by so doing; ought in all reason, to avoid all foolish and unprofitable Disputations, things that gender Strife: and in good earnest apply himself to the Practice of his Duty, to obey when God calls for his Obedience; for the Scripture was not written to beget Pride and Disputes, but Charity and Humility in the Minds of Men. The Gospel was design'd, not only to Exercise the Understanding, but also to influence the Will, and entirely to engage the Affections in Heavenly Matters, in a practical System, wherein we are told that our very Thoughts are to be subject to the Obedience of its Author. And if we heartily believe and consider, that nothing else but Unfeign-
ed.

ed Purity can recommend us unto God, if we take it for granted, that without Holiness no man shall see him: We have little reason to admire our Saviour calls his People *little Flock*, and that *but few enter in at the streight Gate*; for if so be Religion is to Overcome the World, to be Heavenly minded, or in few words, to be like God, what will become of the greater part of Mankind, who are so much unlike him? What man is instructed for the Kingdom of God? Who then can be saved? Shall we rise again to the Resurrection of the Just? Lord thou knowest! If so be Religion be pure and undefiled, and admits not of the least vicious Immorality, 'tis to be feared that many men continue very wicked, while they go under the sacred Names of *Christians*. For *How is the faithful City become an Harlot*, it was full of *Judgment, Righteousness lodged in it*, but now *Murder*. *Tby Silver is become dross, and tby Wine mixt with Water*. *Tby Princes are. Rebellious and Companions of Thieves*; every one loveth gifts and followeth after rewards, judge not the Fatherless, neither doth the cause of the Widow come before them, Isa. 1. 21, 22. What then shall we say?

say ? shall we condemn the Religion of the blessed *Jesus*, because Iniquity does so much abound ? God forbid ; his Religion is like himself, without spot or wrinkle, 'tis holy, just and good, but men corrupt it to their own destruction. If you cast an Eye back upon the 13th Verse of this Chapter, *St James* will tell you, that no man must say that he is tempted of God, that is, let no man charge God with his Sins ; if men engage in any wickedness, be it to themselves, for God cannot be tempted, neither tempteth he any one ; but every man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own Lust and enticed. We may therefore spare our selves the trouble of searching out the Causes of our Miseries, the Plague is in our own Heart. *The lust of our mind when it hath conceived, bringeth forth sin ; and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death.* This Text is very full and comprehensive, denoting the whole of the Christian Doctrine in very few words, and also of admirable weight to fortifie the Christians against the Errors and Heresies of those times, particularly to oppose the prevailing Sect of the *Gnostick Heresie*, which our Apostle here refers to, and which for Sensuality and

open

open Wickednes was the greatest Deformities that ever clouded the beauty of the Church : For this Sect were a People that did allow their Converts a greater liberty in their Lifes, than Christians did admit. The Apostles preacht up a good Life as necessary to Salvation, but these on the contraty did assert, that a man might be a Christian, and at the same time use the utmost freedom with the greatest Epicure : Upon this score they gain'd ground in those early times, they found the People very tractable and easie to be wheedl'd to such a licentious Creed, when they did affirm that a man may love the World more then God, it was no hard matter in those times to gain Proselytes ; such pallatable pleasing Drines were swallowed without much Consideratiou. But the Apostles of our Lord, who had conversed with their Master, and had the greatest reason to know his Sense of things, are clearly of another mind, which all have with St *James* in Opposition to these Libertines, acquainted us, that Religion which must render every man acceptable to God, is pure and undefiled, and consists in visiting the Fatherless and Widow in their Afflictions, and to keep himself unspotted

unspotted from the World. The words will oblige me to do these two things. *1st*, In general to shew that Religion which we must ever hope to please God with, is pure and Spiritual, without mixture of Hypocrisie or Sensuallity. *2dly*. That Charity to the Needy and Purity of Life are the Essential parts of this Religion, which are explicitly delivered in the Text: The former in these words, *visiting the Fatherless and Widow*: The latter in these, *keeping himself unspotted from the World*. First, I am to shew in general that the Religion whereby we must ever hope to please God, is of untainted Purity, without any mixture of Hypocrisie, or Sensuallity. In order to which I hope I may take for granted the Being of a God, which thing being pre-suppos'd as a truth, it is hardly to be conceived, how a man can well satisfie a brutish and irrational Deity, that will be imposed upon by his Creatures, and worship'd at any rate. How is it possible for a Man to believe that God should approve of Vice, or any wise connive at the practice of it. But admit a Man be so absurd, and so offer Violence to himself, the Scripture is so plain and convincing, proclaiming the divine dis-
B pleasure

pleasure against every thing that is Evil, Hypocritical and Unsincere, that he that owns the former, cannot deny the latter, that is in words at length: He that believes the truth of the Scriptures, that God does not equivocate with Mankind, but speaks as he means; that Man must of necessity confess that nothing can be a pleasing Sacrifice to God, but what is Spiritual and Holy, and by strong consequence that every thing of what stamp soever that is not real and honest, is an abomination in his sight, and is so very plain that he that runs may read it. For how often does the Almighty declare by the Mouth of his Holy Prophets, that no Wickedness shall dwell with him, *For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in Wickedness, neither shall Evil dwell with thee*, Psal. 5. 4. Whoever hath been acquainted ever so little with the Holy Scripture, cannot but have observed it to be the usual Stile thereof, even under the Jewish Dispensation: Though the outward Worship for some reasons, which I cannot now stand to repeat, was different from that now required at our hands in the Christian Church. God made a solemn declaration against Sacrifices, Isa. 1. 12. *When ye*
come

come before me, who bath required this at your hands to tread my Courts ? Bring no more vain Oblations, &c. Which was to shew that this was not that which God required of them alone ; for by reason of the *Jews* obstinacy, the gracious and merciful Lawgiver was pleased to condescend to their Capacities, and to command them the Observance of those things as were most likely to keep them in a tollerable subjection, the primary Institution of those Spiritual Observances, was no otherwise design'd then to gratifie their Pallates ; for even under the Law, Obedience was most suitable, most acceptable to the Divine Nature, and therefore we find that God calls for other things from them, such as these, *Wash and be clean ; put away the evil of your doings before mine eyes : Cease to do evil, learn to do well : seek judgment, deliver the oppressed ; judge the Fatherless.* These are, substantial Duties, such as became the Majesty of a wise God to demand, and an obedient People to perform. And if the divine Wisdom exacted Internal Holiness from the stubborn unmannagable *Jew*, much more now from us under the Gospel. When our Saviour discoursed the Wo-

man of *Samaria*, *John* 4. 23. he was pleased to say that *the hour was come, when the true Worshippers should worship the Father in Spirit and Truth*: whence it is natural to infer, that the Religion which we ought to pay to our Heavenly Father, is not born of Noise or Art, but a new Nature in forming the Minds of Men, whereby we are taught to know him; and knowing God, to love him with all our Soul, and with all our Strength, and to conform our selves as much as we can to that Perfection which is eminently in God, the imitation of him in Living well, being the best means of arriving to some likeness, Beholding the Glory of God, we are transformed into the same Image. 'Tis true indeed, the *Jews* did expect the *Messiah* should have alarm'd the World with Drums and Trumpets, and that he should have marched through the World, as it is reported Victorious *Hannibal* did sometimes through the *Alps*, making way where he found none, planting his Gospel by force of Arms; but judging this way to be more Military than Religious, he publickly declar'd before *Pilate* the Governour, that *his Kingdom was not of this World*, *Joh. 8.36.* 'Twas not

not such a one as the *Jews* were afraid of, a Government set up to destroy that of *Herod*, but a Spiritual Throne to be erected in the Hearts of his chosen People, to influence their Lives, and make them fit Heirs for the Kingdom of Heaven. That Religion which the most meek and innocent Lord planted in the minds of men, obliges its Professors to pass quietly and inoffensively through this World, and by the most safe and prudent, the most pious and excellent Methods, to steer their Course to Happiness, to lay hold on Eternal Life. This engages men heartily to the Obedience of their Superiors, it possesses the mind with Universal Charity, with the most profound Meekness and Humility, it does not gratifie any impotent silly Passion in Man : we are all by Nature inclined more or less to that dreadful act of *Revenge* ; we are apt for every trifling disgust, to call to the Earth to swallow up our Adversaries, as it did sometimes *Korab*, *Dathan* and *Abiram*. But it is the singular prerogative of the Gospel, to quiet and allay even this troublesome vexing Inclination of Revenge, by teaching us to overcome Evil with Good. Well then, suppose a Man to be Rich

and mighty in the World, and to be affronted by a poor Creature. Let him call to mind, that he is a Christian as well as a Rich Man; and what his *greatness* as a *rich man* might justly abhor, his Charity as a *Christian* might be willing to bear what his power as a great man might tempt to revenge, his Charity as a *Christian* might teach him to forgive. This is the Condescendering Spirit of the Gospel, different from that which by Nature we can have. There is no Wickedness which is not effectually restrained by it, not the least Virtue which receives not a generous encouragement from it. And now does not this Religion sufficiently recommend it self to mankind? Need it any thing else to court our Affections? The *Heathen* were so very sensible of the worth of Religion, that they always stil'd their denfensive War, *pro Aris & Focis*: They plac'd their Altars before their Hearths, their Churches before their Estates and Houses. And if they so highly valu'd a false foppish Religion, how shall we ever set a just value upon the true, the pure, the undefiled Religion of *Christ*? That Religion which we contend for before God, that which spreads it self through all the parts of the Soul, engaging

gaging the whole man in a fix'd, steady, and constant course of Righteousness. And now I am come to speak of the parts which are Essential to it, the First of which is *Charity* to the Needy. Upon which the Holy Scriptures throughout do give a higher preference than any other Duty. *Solomon* himself, the richest Monarch that ever reigned in *Jerusalem*, and the wisest of the Eastern Sophies, no less a Prophet then a King, teacheth us, *Eccles.*

11. 4. *Cast thy Bread upon the Waters, and after many days shalt thou find it.* Commentators agree, that these Words of the Preacher, *Cast thy Bread upon the Waters*, exhort us to the Relief of all such as are distressed. We may find that *Bread* may be taken for *Alms*, if we converse with the Hebrews the Original *לֵבֶם*; *Lehem*, which we commonly translate *Bread*, is taken in the Scripture for all sorts of Provisions; in that sense you may read in *Deut.* 8. 3. *Lehem* signifies the Flesh of Beasts sacrificed, *Lev.* 3. 11. It is used for the Fruit of Trees, *Jer.* 11. 19. *Lehem* is taken for the Fodder of Cattle, *Psal.* 14. 7. because the Hebrew Language consisting of few words, one Word did bear many Significations. So that this word

Lehem amongst the *Jews*, did import all manner of Subsistence, every thing that Man or Beast us'd to live upon. In which sense it is taken in the Lord's Prayer, and in a larger sense, there implying not only the Necessaries of our Body, but also that Angels food, (that *πνιγτὸν ἡμῶν τὸν ἀπεστολὸν*, *Luke* 12. 13.) the Blessed Sacrament, by which our Souls are nourish'd to Eternity. The word *Waters* also admits of divers Interpretations: Yet without doubt all Objects of Charity are here design'd by it, that is the several parts of Mankind, all such as appear poor, infirm, or any way miserable, all that are destitute of Friends and Comfort, that with dejected Countenances implore your Pity. *You shall find it after many days.* For encouragement, their are present Remunerations for those that are Charitable; they shall have their Wishes very much gratify'd in this World, and in the World to come, their Hopes shall expire in a happy Fruition. Thou shalt live many days to do Good with thy Riches, and when thou hast finished thy Course of multiplying good Offices to thy Brethren; then after many days thou shalt find an Heavenly Treasure, to the Accomplishment

ment of thy felicity. If we come into the New Testament, we shall see it full and repleinſt with frequent Exhortations to this Duty, and proportionable Rewards annexed. If you are pleased to read over the Writings of St. Paul, especially his 13th Chapter of his *first Epistle to the Corinthians*, you will find that the glorious Fabrick of *Christianity* is founded upon *Charity*; 'tis not only a single Grace without, but all the Virtues wrapt up in one Word. This does all the Work. It is the Salt wherewith we are seasoned. Without *Charity* we can neither be good *Christians*, nor dutiful Subjects: Without this, we do expunge our selves even out of the Catalogue of *Christians*, & *de facto*, put our selves into that of Infidels. So true is that of the Eloquent Apostle, *If we have all other things in a most ample exquisite manner, and have not Charity, we are as sounding Brass, and a tinkling Cymbal.* But it is not my design to speak of Charity in so large a sense, as it condemns all unmerciful censuring of other mens Actions, or as it forbids every pitiful Unchristian Revenge, but as it particularly relates to the Relief of our Brothers Necessities; and that taken in this sense, is a con-

siderable Branch of our Religion. But some may peradventure think that *Rich Men* are only concern'd in this Duty, as having wherewithal to exercise their *Charity*, and consequently that the poorer sort are excluded from having any share in it, being themselves meer Objects of Pity. But did we allow of this foolish way of arguing, we should be forc'd to confess, that our Saviour *Christ* was the most miserable Person upon Earth, who was so very poor, that he had not where to lay his Head. Past all peradventure, God who is the Author of our Faculties, every Man in some measure may be beneficial to Mankind. Insomuch that Men of all qualities, *high and low, rich and poor*, are to their power concerned to consult the Necessities of mankind. Many are the Afflictions which are incident to Man in this Life. *When the unjust Man enters into the Field of the Fatherless, and removes the Old Land-mark.* Here is an opportunity for the States-man to shew himself a Pattern of Good Works, in being like God, who helps those to Right, who suffer Wrong. When the Simple is out of the way, that is an occasion offer'd to the Learned to recover a Soul, which our Saviour

Saviour died for. Let him restore such a one in the *Spirit of Meekness*, by *Advice and Counsel*. Let him endeavour to turn the *Hearts of the Disobedient to the Wisdom of the Just*. This is to be like him who came to Preach the *Gospel*, *who came not to call the Righteous, but Sinners to Repentance, and went about doing Good*. When the Aged and Orphans are in want, then let the *Rich Man* glory in his *Riches*, by filling the empty Bowels, and relieving the gaping *Necessities* of the Poor, and to lay up a good Foundation for the time to come. And now what can the *Fatherless and Widow* do? are these poor *Creatures* capable of being useful in their *Generation*? can they make any grateful *Compensation or Return* to their *Benefactors*? Yes, certainly, the meanest *Peasant* in his *Cottage* may in some sense oblige the *Prince* in his *Throne*, that is by their *Prayers*, to which the *Divine Goodness* seemeth to bear an extraordinary regard in *Scripture*, *Psal. 69. 33. The Lord heareth the Prayer of the poor and destitute, and their Cry is not hid from him.* And did we thus in our several *Stations and Capacities*, study and delight to do good, and promote the welfare of our *Brethren*,

how happy should we be ? There would be no leading into Captivity, no just matter of Complaint in our Streets. 'Tis our duty to act thus, *1st.* As we are Men. *2dly.* As we are Christians. First, Nature it self hath made such alliance between Man and Man, as are not to be broken upon every trifling disagreement. If there were no other tie than that of common Humanity, it is plain that that will highly oblige us to stand in the Gap, to prevent, if we can, a Brother's ruin. 'Tis not below any Man, to stoop to kind and neighbourly Offices. *Nam pari sorte nascimur. Virtute distinguimur.* Nature hath plac'd all Mankind upon a Level. Though Providence, for some wise and necessary ends, hath distinguish'd our Stations, placing some upon plain, others upon rising Ground: Some in a high, others in a low Condition: Yet we are all plac'd within the reach of God's Power, he that may humble the most proud and lofty. It may be one Day or other our own Case to be in want, and therefore it is an Act of Common Prudence and Policy to Relieve a Brother: And this is not a thing spoken at a venture, but upon sound deliberation, and from the Nature and Circumstances of

of our state here below. *Heb. 13. 3.* Remember them that suffer Adversity, as being your selves also in that Body. This is so reasonable a duty, as to neglect it, is to sink below Nature, and to be inconsistent with our selves, as we are Men. And if so, then it will be unnecessary to heap up Scriptures, to prove it our Duty as we are *Christians*, for from the beginning it was not so, though the Gospel hath much enlarg'd and improv'd it. *Abraham, Lot, Job*, these were very eminent Examples of this Duty under the Law, in entertaining the Fatherless into their Houses, and inviting the Poor to their own Tables. But if any pretend that this is of Jewish concernment, and not so much relating to the time of the Gospel, which is not a Law of Works. Our Saviour will reply, That he came not to destroy the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfil; not to banish Charity out of the World, but to improve it, to enlarge its Empire among the Sons of Men. So that to exercise *Charity*, is to follow the very Steps of our Saviour, and to obey the dictates of our Supreme Master. Of so great worth and truth was this Fundamental Truth in his account, that he seems

to assign Men's Portion in the next Life, according to their Charitable Acts in this, *Matth. 25. 35, For I was an hungred, &c.* The *Pbarisees*, those devout Hypocrites, were seemingly exact, dividing the Hair in Religion; but our Saviour was pleas'd to give them a more Compendious, as well as a more safe way to be Religious, *Luke 11. 41. Give Alms of such things as you have, and behold all things are clean to you.* They are efficacious to pres and exhort us, as it is possible for Words to be, or Men to conceive. How comes it to pass then (that considering the frequent Inculcations of the Gospel to this in every page) Men are generally so Uncharitable. Chiefly from these two Reasons. *First*, Because Men entertain a false notion of *Charity*, placing of it purely in bare Wishes and Compassionate Affections. *Secondly*, Because Men are pleas'd to pass by *Charity* as no part of Religion. Both are absurd and very prejudicial to the growth of Piety amongst us. Some Men are apt to stile themselfes Charitable, when they do no harm, by a meer abstinence from Evil; but let no Man deceive himself. When we are commanded to love our Brother, 'tis not only for-

forbidden us to hate him, but we are commanded to omit no opportunity of expressing our Love by our Actions ; to love in Deed and in Truth. Certainly, you would judge that Man Unchristian, who seeing his Neighbours House on Fire, would not assist and contribute his Endeavours to the quenching of it. It is preposterous for us to hug our selves with the thoughts of being Righteous, when really we are not ; not to relief the Poor, is to oppress him ; not to heal his Sores, in a Scripture dialect ; is in effect the same, as to wound and lash him. You know the Parable, *Luke 10. 30. He that went down from Jericho, and fell among Thieves, stript of his Garments, and half dead ; the Priest went that way, saw him, and passed by on the other side ; the Levite also came and looked on, and that was all.* These men, the Priest and Levite, added nothing to his Miseries, they left the Poor Man as they found him : And were they Charitable ? They were so far from being Charitable, that to my apprehension, they were little better then the Thieves that robb'd him. This I mentioned on purpose to let you see that Religion does not consist in pure Negatives. 'Tis

not enough to shake our Heads at the Calamities of our Neighbour, and to please our selves that we were not accessory to his Ruine ; we are to behold the good *Samaritan*, that took Compassion on him, that bound up his Wounds, brought him to his Inn, and took care of him. We are commanded by the great Exemplar of Charity, *To go and do likewise*. Some are pleas'd to pass by that Duty, counting it an undervaluing of the Blood of Christ, and a beggarly way of going to Heaven. But I think it is very sad, if we can find in our Hearts to part with nothing for his sake, that parted with his Life for ours. Prayers alone cannot attone his Displeasure, though we are not to look upon them as fruitless and unnecessary ; however, I speak this to stir up your minds, by way of Remembrance, that we are not to expect the favour of a holy and wise God, by the meer importunity of our Devotion, without Conscience of Obeying his Commands. These two have a Reciprocal influence upon each other. The Worship of God without Obedience, is vain. So Obedience without Worship is impossible. Tho' we break our Hearts in Prayer, all our most zealous

zealous passionate Addresses without Charity and Purity of Desires, will infallibly perish in the Air : So true is that of the *Psalmist*, *If I regard Iniquity in my Heart, God will not hear me.* *To do good therefore, and communicate, forget not ; for with such Sacrifices God is well pleased.* And so I am come to the Second Essential Part of Religion *To keep himself Unspotted from the World*, which consists in Purity of Life. This is a precept which seems at first sight to stagger the best Christian ; for considering all the inviting *allurements* of this world, the Pleasures and the Profits of it. Who among the Sons of Men can believe himself able to renounce all ? Is it possible for Flesh and Blood to forego Houses and Estates, is it seen to attempt it ? This seems to cut off the Sinews of our Endeavours, and to lay asleep the Powers of the Mind. With Men this is impossible ; but if we look up, *with God all things are possible.* To prevent misapplications therefore, two things are necessary to be considered : *First*, That there is no absolute state on this side Heaven : no ^{Amen} in Religion. I mean a Hitherto thou shalt go in Holiness, and no further. The Apostle saith, *Grow in Grace.* But how long, not a word of that ; we are

are to be still doing, till we come to Heaven, whose happiness consists in Vision. We are not to pretend to Apostles purity, as the Blessed Angels are called *Pure*. While we are in the Body, corruption will be found in us. It was the peculiar of *Christ*, who was *God* as well as *Man*, to say, *The Prince of this World bath nothing in me*, John 14.

30. 2dly, We need not employ our Care to keep our selves from all the things of this World; for 'tis not the property of every thing in it to stain and defile the Soul. We are allowed a free genuine Converse to Love as Brethren, nay to love the World, but always with this proviso, that we do not equal that with our Love of God. We are then to use our utmost endeavours, to bring the Body under the command of the Spirit, by keeping our selves free from Worldly Pollutions, that is *the Lust of the Eye, the Lust of the Flesh, and the Pride of Life*. This being well considered, we cannot despair of attaining a perfect Conquest over the World; for whatever ought to be the Object of our just and reasonable Desires is allowed us in it. But with what Armour shall we fight? By what means shall we lay hold upon the Crown? St. John will tell you, that *it is by Faith in the Son of God*.

God. Who is he that overcometh the World ? It is *He that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God.* The *Israelites* as long as they thought upon the Gyants and *Anakims*, were not convinced of the possibility of Conquering the Land of *Canaan*: So may it fare with us, if we insist only upon the difficulties of our Christian Warfare, that there are strivings without, and strivings within: our Spirits may flag. But if we muster up the Auxiliaries of our most Holy Faith: when we compare our Assistants with the difficulties: that as their is a Devil without to tempt us, so their is a Spirit within to help our InfirmitieS, and a God above to intercede for us, we have just reason to be of good Cheer, to deny our selves, and to go on to perfection, *knowing that we shall reap in due time, if we faint not.* It was an excellent Advice of the Son of *Sirach*. *My Son, if thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thy Soul for Temptation,* Eccles. 2. 1. He that desires to arrive at a good degree of Holiness, must call in all the Forces of his Soul, for so noble atchievements, prepare himself to go to Battel against his Enemies. *To subdue our Passions, to break off old Habits and Customs,* is not a work so easie, as that may be effected in a moment: all

which is included in this, in *keeping our selves unspotted from the World*. We cannot do all this in a Hurry, but must be exercised in this great work Day and Night. It must be confess that our Saviour's own Disciples were not so mortified to the world, but they did *contend among themselves, who should be greatest*, being bred in the Jewish Religion, which was attended with temporal Promises, but having fully understood the design of their Master's Coming, how *holily* and *humbly*, how *meekly* and *inoffensively* did they walk through this treacherous world. The *Heathens* called the *Christians* a company of Ideots, for abandoning the Pleasures of this *World* for some future Contingencies, as they term'd those of the *World* to come. This may be tollerable in *Pagans*, but their are no motives that a *Christian* should be in love with this *Life*. For he that believes *that eternal damnation is due to any Sin*, cannot consider this, and gratifie a Lust. He that stedfastly believes *that the Wrath of God shall be executed upon those that obey not the Gospel*, will not, if he might be Master of the whole *World*, lose his own Soul; such a Man is above Temptation, will resist all the *charms* of Sensuallity, as Religious *Joseph* did the Importunities,

portunities of *Potiphar's Wife*, with a *How shall I do this wickedness, and Sin against God?* So remarkable and Heroick was the Mortification of the *Primitive Christians*, so little regard had they to the concerns of this *Life*, that as soon as they were convinced that there was another, immediately upon this Joyful News, *as many as had Lands and Estates, sold them, and brought the Money and laid it at the Apostles Feet*, *Acts 4. 34.* And if we believe the same blessed Resurrection, why are we so concerned for our Lands and Possessions? why do we tremble every moment least the Darlings of ours be snatched away from us? is it not because our *Affections are not yet on things above, but on things on Earth.*

And now having done with the Text, and seen that the *Religion* which must fit us for the Kingdom of *Heaven*, is *holy and undefiled*; What remains on our parts, but that we seriously engage ourselves in the *actual practice of it*, which will bring us in many and mighty advantages, 1st, Besides the particular influence it will have upon our selves, by *establishing a firm Peace within a Good Conscience*, of having *done our Duty*, which is the most *sure Refuge in time of need*. It will also have a mighty force

force upon Strangers to the Commonwealth of *Is-
rael* ; If we delight our selves in doing good. Those
Men that will not come to our Churches to hear
us what we speak, may in our Streets, by seeing
what we do, in a manner convinced of the truth of
our Doctrine ; when they see that our Eyes are
lent to the Blind to direct them, when they see
that our Feet are lent to the Lame to support them,
when they see that we part with a Coat to him that
hath none, they will say *God is in this People of a
Truth, surely the Fear of God is in this Place.* So
that what our Doctrines can neither convince nor
convert, our Actions may do both, our Lives ser-
ving instead of Arguments to convince Unbelie-
vers, that *we are of the Household of Faith.* 2dly,
If we cannot arrive to this, to gain Proselytes to the
Faith by our Exemplary Piety, yet this at least
will be the blessed effect of it, we shall thereby in-
fallibly stop the Mouths of Gainsayers, and
defeat the Hopes of our Adversaries, if so be *Char-
ity* spreads it self like the thriving Mustard-seed in
the Parable, in our Cities, and in our Families.
How happily, how safely, should we lodge in the
fruitful Branches thereof. If we strive like the *An-
gels of God*, to *love each other* ; if we *sincerely
practice*

practice this *pure Religion*, our Adversaries shall never prevail against us. This *little Island* shall continue as it is this day, the mark of Envy to all the Nations round about us. The *Abominations of Desolation* shall never stand in the *Holy Place*. If we do our Duty, God will not fail to manifest his Care for *Sion*; he will shew that he loveth the Gates of *Sion* more than all the Dwellings of *Jacob*. *3dly*, and *lastly*, the Practice of this most *Holy Religion*, will not only secure us from danger, but also procure us *everlasting happiness* hereafter. Charity and Purity of Life are ^{the *commezs*} ~~all~~ things that accompany Salvation as the Apostle speaks, without these and the benefits of his Death, we cannot be saved; and with these we cannot be damned: These will seal Happiness to our Dust and make us immortal in the Grave. By the tenour of these Graces we are in actual Communion with the Church militant here on Earth, and without which we must never hope to be made Members of the **Triumphant in Heavens**.